

Date: February 11, 2020

To: North Pacific Fishery Management Council

From: Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC)

Re: Annual Meeting and Recommendations on Board of Fisheries Proposals

ATTENDEES

Committee Members:

Lance Farr (Chair), Jamie Goen (Secretary, non-voting), Jake Jacobsen, Kevin Kaldestad, Mike Simpson, Gary Painter, Steve Minor, Edward Poulsen

(Committee members not in attendance: Stefanie Moreland, Brett Reasor, Tom Suryan, Elizabeth Reed, Dean Fasnacht)

Others in Attendance:

Jenni Klein (ABSC-staff), Sarah Marrinan (Council staff), Scott Goodman (BSFRF)

MINUTES

Meeting called to order and began with selection of Officers.

Selection of Officers

Motion for Lance Farr to continue as Chair, passed with no objection. Noted Steve Minor will be vice-Chair. No changes to the Committee membership suggested.

Board of Fisheries Proposals

261: Adopt a new Bering Sea Tanner crab harvest strategy used to set annual harvest limits

This proposal was introduced by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) and considers revisions to the Bairdi harvest strategy through a management strategy evaluation (MSE), a model-based tool for evaluating risk. Industry has noted they want robust harvesting of exploitable males when warranted while limiting the likelihood of season closures. Scott Goodman (BSFRF) explained broadly the options coming out of the MSE and the stakeholder involvement in the process along the way. BSFRF noted they are supporting and funding the MSE work. However, as a non-profit science foundation, they are not advocating for a policy position.

To date, there is general alignment with ADFG staff (Westward Region) and industry preferences.

ADFG staff comments are expected to be available soon and will likely show they recommend two variations of the "female dimmer." The female dimmer is a harvest strategy that includes female biomass in the exploitation rate on males, decreasing the exploitation rate on mature males as female biomass decreases. ADFG's recommendation includes the following two variations on the female dimmer: (1) a lower bound of 5% exploitation rate on mature male biomass and an upper bound of 20% and (2) a lower bound of 10% exploitation rate on mature male biomass and still with an upper bound of 20%. Both of these options would include an additional conservation measure of a 50% cap on exploited legal males (ELM, or 5" males) to ensure 5" males are left on the grounds to reproduce. ADFG looking for options that balance conservation with economic objectives.

PNCIAC also considered the Ad-Hoc Bairdi Committee's preliminary recommendations of:

- Female Dimmer, with a lower bound of 10% and an upper bound of 20%, with a 50% ELM cap
- Female Dimmer, with a lower bound of 10% and an upper bound of 22.5%, with a 50% ELM cap
- Male-Only Ramp, with a lower bound of 5% and an upper bound of 20%, with a 50% ELM cap

Noting the Ad-Hoc Bairdi Committee put a priority on not risking a lower than 50% ELM cap.

To date, ADFG and the Ad-Hoc Bairdi Committee have in common the option of a female dimmer with a lower bound of 10% and an upper bound of 20%, with a 50% ELM cap.

PNCIAC discussed the difference in the floor values of 5% and 10%. If males and females are generally tracking together than a lower floor approach to conservation generally makes sense. However, if males are tracking upward while females are declining then a higher floor makes sense. This would take advantage of clean shell mature males that may be trending upwards until they trend downward to track with the females. Generally, male and female biomass has tracked together, although there has been a period of time where they did not. PNCIAC noted they want to harvest crab when worth more money and before they turn old shell, think 10% would work better for that.

PNCIAC briefly discussed the female dimmer option with an upper bound of 22.5%, noting it hits the 50% ELM cap more often.

The male-only options in the MSE do not consider females in the equation. Because of this, ADFG has noted in conversations that they would likely recommend lowering the ELM below 50% in the male-only options as an added conservation measure to buffer uncertainty.

PNCIAC supports the female dimmer option with a lower bound of 10% exploitation rate on mature male biomass and an upper bound of 20%, with a 50% ELM cap. Their rationale is that this option is shared between ADFG and the Ad-Hoc Bairdi Committee. While there may be better options for industry, including some that could be scientifically justified, this is a shared option among the agency and industry preferences. This option has been vetted through an MSE process with stakeholder involvement along the way. Industry involved in the MSE process noted appreciation for the transparency and positive working relationship with ADFG and a desire to maintain that.

262: Modify the Bering Sea C. opilio harvest strategy definition of “exploited legal males”

This proposal was submitted by Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC) and considers lowering the market-preferred size of opilio. ABSC intends to withdraw this proposal until further scientific information is available on the potential impact to the sustainability of the stock.

PNCIAC did not discuss or take a position on this proposal.

263: Modify retention of incidentally harvested Bering Sea District C. bairdi during directed C. opilio season

This proposal was submitted by ABSC and considers allowing a small amount of bairdi to be landed as incidental catch (cling-ons) with opilio when the bairdi season is closed. Any bairdi landed would be tallied for catch accounting purposes and forfeited (i.e., could not be sold). ADFG staff have indicated they do not support this proposal. ABSC intends to discuss this proposal further with ADFG and may consider withdrawing it.

PNCIAC has no comment on this proposal.

264: Amend Area J Tanner crab season opening weather delay criteria

PNCIAC noted this proposal does not pertain to them and has no comment.

265: Update Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab registration regulations

PNCIAC noted this proposal would provide more flexibility and supports this proposal.

266: Change the season dates for the Registration Area O golden king crab fishery to March 1-October 31

PNCIAC has no comment on this proposal.

268: Allow gear transfers to be authorized by electronic mail

PNCIAC noted this proposal would benefit industry by providing flexibility and supports this proposal.

269, 272: observer trainees

PNCIAC briefly discussed these proposals and appreciates that it would raise standards of observers and make it easier to terminate poor performing observers. Because these proposals would ultimately result in better fisheries data used in management, PNCIAC supports these proposals.

Meeting adjourned 1:50pm

DRAFT